

MINUTES
Conservation Commission Regular Meeting
December 1, 2021, 7:00 pm
Room 135, Town Hall, 100 Pocono Road, Brookfield, CT 06804

1. Call to Order

Chair J. Bronn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Chair J. Bronn, Vice Chair J. Blick, Regular Member C. DePoi, Regular Member M. Carmody, Regular Member T. Cappiello and Alternate Member A. Schutte-Bell

Also Present: Recording Secretary A. Kennedy

Absent: Conservation Director A. Dew, Alternate Member M. Dew and Alternate Member R. Blessey

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

- **November 3, 2021**

M. Carmody made a motion to approve the minutes from November 3, 2021 as submitted. T. Cappiello seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

3. Guest and Public Comment

4. Correspondence

Chair J. Bronn discussed correspondence received from Nicole Starkweather of Adventure Scientists. He explained this is a group that would like to take samples from 2 black walnut trees at Happy Landings. He said according to N. Starkweather, black walnut is very rare and valuable and she has already received permission from DEEP to do this. She said they retrieve these samples by making a small incision into the tree, $\frac{3}{4}$ the width of a pencil, and they refill the hole with some kind of natural sealing agent. She said they use the information to create a database, for future tracking purposes. Chair J. Bronn said the hesitation is whether any damage is done to the tree with this process, and wanted to discuss with the Commission before authorizing.

Chair J. Bronn read WEO A. Dew's report, noting there has not been much change in the budget. They paid P. McPadden for the work at Nabby. T. Cappiello said the patio looks beautiful. Chair J. Bronn said WEO A. Dew reported she is waiting for a second estimate for the Gurski bathroom. Chair J. Bronn discussed the property at Dunsinane Road, noting Paul Elconin from Northwest Conservation District would like to purchase the property for \$400,000, of which the Conservation Commission would contribute \$100,000. He said the asking price is approximately \$1 million.

Chair J. Bronn said WEO A. Dew's report also asks whether the Commission would like to raise the rent at Eriksen. He said the current rent is \$1,325, of which the Housing Authority pays \$616. He said they can only raise the rent \$25 per year, per the Housing Authority. He said the tenant has been getting less support from Housing as his children are getting older and independent. The Commission discussed the issue and decided to raise the rent due to improvements to the property.

Chair J. Bronn said he spoke with Christopher Brooks, the Eagle Scout working on the project at Old Bridge. He said he visited Old Bridge this weekend and took pictures of the pathway that C. Brooks restored, as well as adding 2 benches and multiple birdhouses.

Chair J. Bronn made a motion to raise the rent \$25 for the property located at 8 Nabby Road, Eriksen Farm. Vice Chair J. Blick seconded the motion and C. DePoi abstained. The motion carried 4-0-1.

5. **Treasurer's Report** - Chair J. Bronn said not much has changed, and did not have the exact number to report at this time.

6. **Old Business**

A. **Invasive Plant Removal Project**

Chair J. Bronn discussed different ways the Commission could move forward with this project and asked the Commission members for their input. T. Cappiello discussed his notes from the previous discussions with T. Schaeffer. The Commission discussed the timing of the work, access to volunteers, etc. C. DePoi discussed a method using tall plants to drown out the smaller plants. She said they could consider sunflowers, as they are perfect pollinators for bees, birds, and all of the plant stalks get eaten by cows and sheep. She said there is a sunflower farm in Griswald called Buttonwood Farm, and she emailed them for information on growing sunflowers. She thought they could try this method in a small section of Eriksen. The Commission discussed the process needed for this idea, including how to keep the public informed of what is happening. A. Schutte-Bell said someone messaged her asking if it was ok to start pulling some invasives up and just leave it there for Parks & Rec to pick up and A. Schutte-Bell said she would discuss it at the meeting. Chair J. Bronn said he wasn't sure if Parks & Rec would pick up the brush pile.

A. Schutte-Bell discussed her communications with and research on Sustainable CT, and explained a crowd funding option. She also discussed grant options. A. Schutte-Bell said knapweed has been an issue the Conservation Commission has struggled with for some time and should be dealt with. She suggested a pilot program at Eriksen, but noted one down side being Eriksen doesn't have much foot-traffic, and therefore would be hard to publicize. C. DePoi noted getting rid

of invasives and bringing in more native plants would help tackle the tick problem, which would encourage many people to be in favor of the project. J. Blick said she loves the idea of talking to Sustainable CT and figuring out how to crowd fund. She said she thinks they would have to work on small sections of the different properties over a number of years. She said they should find out how much money they have before deciding where to start.

T. Cappiello said he likes the idea of starting with Eriksen because it is a smaller property. He said the drawback is that unless they do it piecemeal it could really impact the growth of that field for several years. He said it would require them doing a very good job of informing the public.

M. Carmody said she thinks the Eriksen property would be an ideal spot for a model program, noting the barn quilt going up, and the Community Garden.

Chair J. Bronn said WEO A. Dew suggested the Commission get the advice of another expert to survey the properties. He said WEO A. Dew also said it would be very hard to do this without any kind of chemical.

Chair J. Bronn said that while their attention has shifted toward Eriksen, they also have to discuss Happy Landings. He said they haven't sprayed for nap weed there in a while. J. Blick discussed spray trucks getting access to Happy Landings from the top of the hill as opposed to 25. She said the trucks may not get stuck if they enter there. The Commission discussed the issues at Happy Landings, including mowing and planting trees.

Chair J. Bronn said they are looking into hiring an expert, as suggested by WEO A. Dew. He asked what the Commission thinks the next steps could be, before the next meeting. J. Blick suggested making a statement on social media about what they would like to do, which would require initiating a Conservation Committee Facebook Account. A. Schutte-Bell said she would reach out to T. Schaeffer and the library about setting up a Zoom program to educate the public about invasive species. She said she could also reach out to Sustainable CT again about training for the crowd funding.

B. Approved 2022 Meeting Schedule

7. New Business

A. Election of Officers for 2022

Chair J. Bronn said after discussion with WEO A. Dew they have decided the Committee does not need to elect a Treasurer.

M. Carmody made a motion to re-elect J. Bronn as Chairman and J. Blick as Vice Chair. T. Cappiello seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

J. Blick said she hasn't heard anything from the Girl Scout leader regarding the sign at Lillinonah. She noted that before they go down there, Parks and Rec or

Public Works need to cover up the dangerous areas, and she is not sure if that has been done yet.

Chair J. Bronn said when they get to the point of hanging the barn quilt, everyone will be notified. He discussed which side of the barn the Committee thinks the quilt should be placed.

A. Schutte-Bell said she spoke with J. Carmilich and J. Salame regarding the barn at Gurski and read the correspondence she received.

8. Tabled Items

9. Adjournment

Chairman J. Bronn made a motion to adjourn at 8:27 p.m. M. Carmody seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.